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## “LOOKING BACKWARD” AGAIN.

BY EDWARD BELLAMY.

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I DON'T mind admitting that I have greatly enjoyed the pleasant things which have been said about “Looking Backward,” and am much obliged to those who have found it consistent with their consciences to say them. At the same time, I have read such serious criticisms of the book and its plan of industrial reform as have come to my notice with greater interest, if not greater pleasure, than the congratulatory notices. While holding it absolutely beyond question that the next phase of industry and society as based upon it, will be a plan of national coöperation, and that this plan cannot be permanently based upon any other principle than universal industrial service with equality of material condition, I recognize that the details of such a coöperative organization may be greatly varied consistently with these principles.

Though I advance in “Looking Backward” a series of details of such an organization, which seem to me not unreasonable, I have been far from considering them as necessarily the best devices possible, and have accordingly been on the lookout for valuable criticisms and suggestions. Perhaps this statement may be taken as a sufficient response to the large class of criticisms of “Looking Backward,” which have addressed themselves to minor details of the manner of life depicted in the book. These, and even many more important points, may be safely left to the future to settle. The thing for us to settle—the only question which “Looking Backward” has raised which it is worth the time of serious men to discuss—is whether or not there has come to be, between the intellect and the conscience of men and the actual conditions of society and industry, such a degree of incongruity and opposition as to threaten the permanence of the existing order, and whether there is enough ground for faith

in God and man to justify a hope that the present order may be replaced by one distinctly nobler and more humane.

The main objection which I make to the article by General Walker in the February *Atlantic*, entitled "Mr. Bellamy and the New Nationalist Party," is that it totally fails to take into consideration this larger and only really important aspect of the subject. One is tempted to ask where General Walker has lived, that he is able to discuss "Looking Backward" and Nationalism wholly without reference to the present unprecedented ferment in the minds of men, which alone has given the book its circulation and the movement its impetus. Does he not know that thirty years ago "Looking Backward" would have fallen flat, and that the reason it has not done so to-day is that within this period a great revolution has taken place in the minds of reading men and women as to the necessity and possibility of radical social reform?

A criticism of "Looking Backward" in the January number of the *Contemporary Review*, by the eminent French economist, Émile de Laveleye, deals with the subject in a manner so strongly contrasting with General Walker's superficial and often flippant tone that perhaps I cannot better indicate my meaning than by a quotation from the closing paragraph. M. Laveleye says:

"The rapid and extraordinary success in the Anglo-Saxon world of Mr. Bellamy's book is a symptom well worthy of attention. It proves that the optimism of the old-fashioned economists has entirely lost the authority that it formerly possessed. It is now no longer believed that in virtue of the *laissez-faire* principle everything will arrange itself for the best, in the best of all possible worlds. People feel that there is in very truth a *social question*; that is to say, that the division of the good things of this world is not in accordance with the laws of justice, and that something ought to be done to increase the share of the principal agents of production, the workmen."

M. Laveleye then quotes Dupont White:

"It was hoped that the [great modern] increase in the production of riches would secure satisfaction to all, but nothing of the sort has taken place. Discontent is greater and more deeply rooted than ever. From this deceived hope has been formed a new science. It may be called a social science, or it may even be said that it is not a science at all, but it is quite certain that charity in laws is a notion which in our day should be a fundamental doctrine, for beyond the pale of all sects of socialists it has sown in all hearts a feeling of uneasiness, of anxiety and care, an unknown emotion respecting the suffering classes, which has become a matter of public conscience."

While I must claim that the apparent lack on General Walker's part of any such "feeling of uneasiness, of anxiety and care," or any emotion whatever respecting the suffering classes, or any

large view of the subject he discusses, distinctly disables him as a serious critic of Nationalism, I shall endeavor, to the best of my ability, to answer such specific criticisms as he has made.

The objection to the industrial organization outlined in “*Looking Backward*” to which General Walker devotes most space is its alleged excessively military character. From the stress he lays upon this point, it is evident that he has been seriously misled by the use of the term “army of industry,” and by the analogy with the principal of universal military service which was used to illustrate the basis of industrial duty. He apparently labors under the impression that the rigid forms of military discipline are to be applied to the industrial force. It is evident that he has visions of the drill-ground, of the barracks, of the guard-house, and, for all I know, of drum-head courts-martial and firing squads. He protests against the nightmare which he himself has conjured up, in the following terms :

“Doubtless the industrial forces require to be organized and administered both firmly and judiciously, but it is not necessary that discipline shall be carried so far as to deprive the individual of his initiative, to take from him all freedom of choice, and to subject him to an authority which shall have over him the power of life and death, of honor and disgrace.”

Now, these words precisely express my own convictions on the subject. I firmly believe, with General Walker, that while “industrial forces require to be organized and administered both firmly and judiciously,” a harsh or oppressive discipline is not necessary. What, then, is General Walker talking about, and whom is he talking at? If he thinks he is talking about the national army of industry, and its mode of organization and administration as contemplated by the author of “*Looking Backward*,” or by the Nationalists, he is totally mistaken. While men who can work and will not work will doubtless be made to work, it is not believed that any more arduous discipline (or different conditions of life in any respect) will need to be imposed upon industrious men than the workers in any large and thoroughly systematized business at present undergo.

An ounce of fact is worth a pound of theory. There are several thousand clerks employed in the government departments at Washington on terms very similar to those which will obtain in the coming industrial army. The next time General Walker is in Washington it would be a good idea for him to step into one of the departments, and have a little chat with the clerks as

to the amount of military discipline they are subjected to. There are some one or two hundred thousand post-office employees in the country. Has General Walker heard any rumors of a proposed wholesale desertion on their part by reason of the severity of their discipline? Does he understand—to use one of his own expressions as to the industrial army—that “they are obliged to surrender will, power of choice, freedom of movement, almost individuality”? If not, will he tell us why they should have to do so when their number shall be multiplied a hundred-fold?

Just here let me say in passing that the slight precaution of looking about them, before going into convulsions over the plans of the Nationalists, would generally reveal to our critics the working principles of the National plan already in partial operation in contemporary industry, politics, and society. There is, indeed, nothing in the National plan which does not already exist as a germ or vigorous shoot in the present order, and this is so simply because Nationalism is evolution.

But perhaps it may be objected that the present government employee may resign when he pleases, that his work is voluntary. The reply in the first place is that his work must, in fact, be regarded as compulsory, inasmuch as he, like all of us, must work or starve. He cannot leave his place unless he can find other work to do, and he would have this liberty under the National plan, with the additional advantage that a national labor exchange would provide all possible facilities for men who desired to change work or location. The National plan is even so elastic that it will permit a man to loaf the rest of his life, after a very brief service, if he shall consent to accept a quarter or half the rate of support of other citizens.

In view of the misapprehensions into which General Walker has fallen, it may be well to state explicitly that the most important analogy between the military system and Nationalism is the fact that the latter places the industrial duty of citizens on the ground on which their military duty already rests. All able-bodied citizens are held bound to fight for the nation, and, on the other hand, the nation is bound to protect all citizens, whether able to fight or not. Nationalism extends this accepted principle to industry, and holds every able-bodied citizen bound to work for the nation, whether with mind or muscle; and, on the other hand, holds the nation bound to guarantee livelihood to every

citizen, whether able to work or not. As in military matters the duty to fight is conditioned upon the physical ability, while the right to protection is conditioned only upon citizenship, so we would condition the obligation to work upon the strength to work, but the right to support upon citizenship only.

It would, indeed, appear that in using the military analogy I had unwittingly set a snare in divers ways for General Walker, for he says in another place :

"In Mr. Bellamy's army all are to be paid alike, and are to enjoy equivalent physical conditions. The officers and privates are to fare in all respects the same, the highest having no preference whatever over the meanest, absolutely no material consideration being awarded to the greatest powers in production or in administration. Now, the rule is very different from this in the real armies of the civilized world, and Mr. Bellamy would do well to be careful, lest, in leaving out the principle of graded rewards corresponding to gradations of rank, he should omit a feature which may cause his industrial army to fall to pieces."

A considerable experience of criticisms of "Looking Backward" by gentlemen who had been prevented by press of more important business from reading the book had prepared me for some curious statements of what I had put in and what I had left out ; but I was distinctly startled to learn that the principle of graded rewards corresponding to ranks had been left out of the constitution of what General Walker calls "Mr. Bellamy's army." Upon consulting the book again, I was pleased to find that my recollection of it was correct, and that, in fact, a special and characteristic feature of the industrial army is such a system of "rewards corresponding to gradations of rank" as makes diligence and achievement in the public service the sole and sure avenue to all social distinction, posts of authority, and honors of office.

It is quite true that the provision for the physical needs of all is the same, because those needs are the same, and because it is a vital principle of Nationalism that all forms of necessary work, from the scavenger's to the statesman's, are equally worthy. The question which arises on this misunderstanding as to the use of terms is whether General Walker fairly represents public sentiment in ruling out any kind of reward or incentive, except money, as effectual. I submit that he is not a fair representative in this respect of the sentiment of men in general, nor even probably of his own serious second thought. Does he think that it is the difference between the salary of the lieutenant and the captain, or the honor and authority of the

superior rank, which constitute the chief element in the ambitious dreams of the subaltern? Will he assert, that if the difference in the pay of different ranks from lieutenant to major-general were greatly reduced, there would be a corresponding diminution in the military spirit of the army? Does he argue that the Prussian soldier would prize his iron cross the more if it were made of gold? or can he imagine that the Englishman would be stimulated by offering a lump sum for valor, instead of the Victoria cross?

So long as the nations of which armies are parts are made up of ranks divided by the money line, the pay of officers naturally increases with rank, but the principle, so far from being essential to the spirit of the military career, is, so far as it is influential, injurious to it.

Evidently bred of the same spirit that moves General Walker to suggest that the motive of the soldier is, after all, at bottom a sordid one, is the following :

**"Mr. Bellamy's assumption that, were selfish pecuniary interests altogether removed as a motive to action, the sense of duty and the desire of applause would inspire all the members of the community to the due exertion of all their powers and faculties for the general good, is purely gratuitous."**

In the first place, this is a misstatement of the case. I nowhere say or imply that the sense of duty and the desire of applause alone will influence all men sufficiently. As has just been explained, the rewards of authority, of social rank and public prominence, are held out to workers as the prizes of diligence, in a manner in which they never have been brought to bear upon human nature under any industrial or social system before, since the world began. The only incentives which are eliminated under the National plan are the desire of inordinate wealth and the fear of poverty.

But it is in vain that we pile up other motives in place of the lust of gold and the fear of want. General Walker refuses to allow that any other motives than these are capable of moving men to any adequate degree. "From the origin of mankind, to the present time," he says, "the main spur to exertion has been want."

Did General Walker ever employ a tramp who was working on an empty stomach for something to fill it? Did he find that such work, where the spur was purely and solely want, was a profit

able sort of labor? Has he not found, on the contrary, that the work of a man who has a home, money in the bank, and an insurance on his life, a man with whom want is out of any immediate consideration, is worth five times as much per hour as that of the tramp whom he would apparently have us accept as the ideal laborer? Want, indeed, so far from being the main spur to work, is the motive of only the worst work, while good work is done in the proportion in which fear of want is absent, and the instinct of self-development, of ambition and honor, reputation and power, takes its place. In no way is the impotence of want as a spur to exertion more strikingly illustrated than in its failure to stimulate precisely those classes of society which feel it most.

There are thousands of wretched beings in this and every other country, life-long idlers, paupers, vagabonds, who will starve, freeze, and endure every pang sooner than accept work, even when it is offered to them. Is it asked what Nationalism will do with this class? The answer is straight and swift. It will do with them what the present order cannot do; it will make them work. Equality of rights means equality of duty, and in undertaking to guarantee the one the nation will undertake to enforce the other.

General Walker accuses me of militarism. I confess an admiration of the soldier's business as the only one in which, from the start, men throw away the purse and reject every sordid standard of merit and achievement. The very conditions which Nationalism promises—that is to say, security as to livelihood, with duty and the love of honor as motives—are the actual conditions of military life. Is it a wonder that war has a glamour? That glamour we would give to the peaceful pursuits of industry by making them, like the duty of the soldier, public service. Some have said that Nationalism requires a change in human nature; but men on turning soldiers do not become better men, do not experience a change of heart. They are merely placed under the influence of different incentives. Make industry a public service, as war now is, and you will win for work the inspiration of war.

For the portion of General Walker's argument next to be taken up, I bespeak particular attention. He observes:

"Were the phantasy of a state in which every one should have enough and to spare, in which the conditions of life should cease to be arduous and stern, from which care and solicitude for the future should be banished, and the necessities, comforts, and wholesome luxuries of life should come easily to all,—were this wild,



weak dream shown to be capable of realization, well may philanthropists exclaim : 'Alas, for humankind !' There have been races that have lived without care, without struggle, without pains, but they have not become noble races. Except for care and struggle and pains, men would never have risen above the intellectual and physical stature of Polynesians."

I would ask General Walker whether this "wild, weak dream" of a state in which we should have enough and to spare of necessities and reasonable luxuries, with agreeable conditions of labor and no anxiety about the future, is not precisely the ideal which all of us spend our days and nights in trying to realize for the benefit of ourselves, our families, our children, and our relatives. Would General Walker teach us that in seeking this ideal for ourselves and those dear to us we run the risk of becoming Polynesians ? Probably not. Well, now, the whole Nationalist proposition is merely that, instead of seeking this ideal every man for himself and the devil for us all, and thereby for the most part missing it quite, we unite our efforts, and by combined and concerted action command success for all. General Walker's point, then, appears to be that while the effort to better our condition is commendable, and even a matter of duty, so long as it is pursued individually, by the method of mutual hindrance, it becomes Polynesian the moment the method of mutual assistance and coöperation is adopted. I think the reader will admit that I do not exaggerate in claiming this passage of General Walker's argument as the most extraordinary and purely original contribution to social science which has recently been made.

"There are cares that cark and kill," pursues General Walker, with a feeling that makes me suspect he is, after all, a Nationalist at heart ; "there are struggles that are unavailing ; there are pains that depress and blight and dwarf. Well may we look forward"—(surely the man is a Nationalist)—"to a better state, in which much of the harshness of the human condition shall, by man's own efforts, have been removed. But it was no Bellamy who said that in the sweat of their brows should men eat bread." Quite right, General. All Bellamy said was that they should not eat their bread in the sweat of other people's brows.

In discussing the feasibility of a central national control of the entire working force of the country, General Walker says : "The greatest practical difficulty in the application of this principle would be in equalizing the advantages of country and city life." His fear is that under Nationalism nobody would be

willing to live in the country, and consequently there would be a general rush to the cities. It seems very evident to me that General Walker would never have raised this point had he not become temporarily mixed up as to which side he held a brief for. Surely no one can know better than General Walker that it is precisely in this matter of equalizing the advantages of country with city life that the present industrial system has scored one of its most complete and signal failures. The abandonment of the farm for the town is conceded to be one of the most alarming features of the present social situation. What on earth was General Walker thinking of to call attention to the fact that, at the present rate of the rush cityward, the abandonment of the country bids fair to be completed long before the Nationalists have a chance to try their hands? Could there be a more striking illustration, if for the purpose of the figure we may identify General Walker with the system he defends, of a man with an actual and colossal beam in his own eye animadverting upon a theoretical mote in somebody's else ?

Meanwhile it serves our purpose that General Walker should have raised this point, for it gives me an opportunity to remark that a direct tendency of Nationalism will be to check the excessive growth of the cities at the expense of the country. A central control of production and distribution will, to a great degree, destroy the advantages which, under the competitive system, great cities have over villages as localities for manufacturing, and the result will be industrial, and as a consequence social, decentralization. The coöperative features of the National plan will, indeed, greatly increase the pleasures and conveniences of city life, but not relatively more than they will enhance the attractions of life in the village.

I shall now take up the severest charge which General Walker makes against Nationalism. He says that what he justly calls "the fundamental proposition of Nationalism," namely, that all workers shall share alike in the national product, is "dishonest." That there may be no doubt as to his position, he adds that "to say that one who produces twice as much as another shall yet have no more is palpable robbery. It is to make that man for half his time a slave working for others without reward."

Here we have a very explicit statement that the producer should have what he produces, and, as a necessary consequence,

that the non-producer should have nothing, for evidently, if the producer has all he produces, there will be nothing left for the non-producer. Moreover, if it be "dishonest" for the weak worker to share equally with the strong, it would obviously be still more so for the idler to get anything at all. Now, under the present industrial system it is tolerably notorious that the hardest workers and chiefest producers are the poorest paid and worst treated, while not only do idlers share their product with them, but get the lion's share of it. Is General Walker willing that the present industrial system shall be remodelled on the plan he lays down as the only honest one—of giving the whole product to the producer? If so, the Anarchists are to be congratulated upon the ardor of their new disciple. If not, he certainly owes an explanation to the friends of the present industrial system for giving away their case so completely.

Let me suggest that his explanation may be very simple. Instead of the word "produces," he should have used the phrase "can get hold of." This simple change makes all the difference in the world. To say a man is entitled to what he "produces" is to invite instant revolution; but to say that a man is entitled to what he "can get hold of" is to state the fundamental principle of the present order.

Meanwhile I will briefly mention the grounds on which Nationalism insists that the weak worker shall share equally with the stronger, or, to put it more broadly, that all men and women, while required to render such service as they may be capable of, shall share alike this total product. This law results from the fact that Nationalism contemplates society, both economically and morally, not as an accidental conglomeration of mutually independent and unconnected molecules, but as an organism, not complete in its molecules, but in its totality only. It refuses to recognize the individual as standing alone, or as living or working to or for himself alone, but insists upon regarding him as an inseparable member of humanity, with an allegiance and a duty to his fellows which he could not, if he would, cast off, and with claims upon his fellows which are equally obligatory upon them. In a word, Nationalism holds that every one is born into the world a debtor to society for all he can do, a creditor to society for all he needs. It proposes a plan by which this great exchange of duties, this discharge of reciprocal responsibilities, may be effected.

Perhaps General Walker will be able to see that with this plan, which counts all human beings equal partners in a business carried on from generation to generation, from the beginning of humanity to the end of the world, and indefinitely further, the practice of Saturday-night settlements between the members of the firm, with mutual handwashings as to further responsibilities for one another, would scarcely be consistent.

A defect of General Walker's method as a social philosopher is that he overworks his savages and Polynesians as illustrations, when he could easily find much more pertinent analogies in the community about him, if he would only look around a little. For example, in going on to argue that a uniform rate of compensation is ruinous, he says, “Such a levelling downwards would end all progress,” and adds that there are plenty of tribes and races in which it is in full operation. Unfortunately for Nationalism, he remarks, “They are all miserable embruted savages.” Now, the trade-unions of America and England are, to a very large extent, based upon the principle of a uniform scale of wages, and on this basis have been doing the world's work for a long time. It will, doubtless, be a painful surprise to them, and, indeed, to the communities whose work they do, to learn that they are “all miserable embruted savages.” Is not General Walker a trifle harsh?

The limits of this article compel me to pass on to that portion of General Walker's paper in which he discusses the aims and ends of the Nationalist party. He complains that he finds no statement of the means by which Nationalists propose to accomplish their end of having all industries operated in the interest of and by the nation. Now, I may be permitted to say that it is entirely General Walker's own fault if he does not know just the steps by which Nationalists propose to make a beginning in carrying out their programme. In public addresses, in articles published in recognized organs of the movement, and in hearings before legislative committees, there has been no lack of explicit statements on this subject from the beginning of the movement. In this respect, indeed, its history from the start has been a practical refutation of the charge of being impractical, brought against it by sundry critics who have not cared to know the truth.

In the next place, I must correct a serious misstatement made by General Walker. He says in a foot-note to his article :

“While the hero of the book goes to sleep in 1887 and wakes in 2,000, the new state

has been in perfect operation for a long time. The great change is spoken of as having taken place instantaneously, through the simple formation of the industrial army."

This statement is wholly without foundation. In the sermon of Dr. Barton the change is described as having been effected "in the time of one generation," and elsewhere is spoken of as having been completed "early in the twentieth century." There is nowhere in the book the slightest foundation for General Walker's declaration that "the great change is spoken of as having taken place instantaneously through the simple formation of the industrial army." It has always been my own belief, and I think that of Nationalists in general, that, always subject to the leading of events, the process of the nationalization of industry will be gradual, first embracing certain semi-public businesses and extending to others as indicated by their special conditions; the controlling idea being always to avoid derangement of business and undue hardship to individuals. Confiscation is not a method of Nationalism.

For the benefit of those who may share the self-inflicted ignorance of General Walker, I will briefly state what, to begin with, Nationalists propose. First and foremost, they favor an immediate and radical improvement in the school system of the country, which shall give the children of the poor equal advantages with those of the rich, so far as regards the public-school system. In the school-room they would begin to build the new nation. To this end they propose raising the limit of compulsory education year by year, as rapidly as public sentiment will permit. They propose making the compulsory period for all children cover the entire period during which the schools are open, instead of a part of it, as, for example, in Massachusetts a beggarly twenty weeks in the year, the schools being open nearly twice that time. They propose to make the employment of children during term time or school hours a misdemeanor. In cases of great poverty they propose such provision for the partial support of children as may be necessary to enable them to attend school.

The Nationalists propose the immediate assumption by the municipalities of the heating, lighting, and surface and elevated car lines of towns, with all other services now performed by corporations. They oppose and protest against the granting of any

more public franchises to individuals or corporations under any circumstances. Let the people attend to their own business. They propose the nationalization of telephones and telegraphs, and the assumption of the express business by the post-office. They propose national control of the railroads of the country. They propose that all mineral deposits hereafter discovered or opened shall belong to the nation. They propose national control of all coal mines now in operation.

A body of 1,500,000 workingmen would by these measures be taken into the public service. It is proposed that this force should be organized on a thoroughly humane basis of steady employment, reasonable hours, pensions for sickness, accident, and age, with liability to discharge only for fault or incompetence after a fair hearing.

A specific plan is proposed by which political executives would be deprived of influence through patronage over the industrial service, and its abuse for partisan ends rendered impossible.

It is claimed that the public control of these branches of business would result not only in the great betterment of the condition of the employees, but also in far greater cheapness and efficiency of service. Take the single instance of the coal business. Instead of shutting down the mines whenever the demand temporarily slackens, and putting up prices as soon as it starts up again, the government would work the mines continuously to their full capacity. Instead of piling up the product at tidewater to clog transportation at any increase of demand, and thus excuse extortionate prices, the coal would be forwarded as fast as mined to distributing centres all over the country, from which consumers could be promptly and conveniently served. The price of coal under these conditions would never exceed the figures represented by the cost of mining and the actual freight under favorable transportation conditions, nor, with suitable accumulations at the distributing points, need it vary between winter and summer, or between mild and severe seasons.

Lack of space forbids me to dwell upon the effect to purge our legislative and congressional lobbies, to put an end to stock-gambling in its chief form, and to terminate the wholesale swindling of the investing public by railroad promoters, speculators, grabbers, and wreckers, which would result from nationalizing the railroads.

EDWARD BELLAMY.